

A group of approximately 15 people are gathered outdoors for a protest. Many are wearing bright yellow t-shirts with the text 'KEEP ACCESS ALIVE!'. They are holding several signs: a large white sign on the left that reads 'SAVE DATV' in red and 'SAVE FREE SPEECH' in blue; a green sign that says 'Keep Access Alive!'; a sign that reads 'SB 117 BAD for OHIO'; and a sign that says 'Keep My Freedom To Speak'. An American flag is being held by one of the protesters. The background shows a brick building and trees.

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KEEP US CONNECTED

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post-conference issue of *Community Media Review* were taken by Rob G.H. McCausland.

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From the Executive Director

Focus on the Ocean

■ BY HELEN SOULÉ



Helen Soulé, Ph.D., has provided leadership to the public and nonprofit sector at the local, state, and national level for over 25 years. Most recently, Dr. Soulé served as executive director of Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation. At the U.S. Department of Education, Soulé was chief of staff to the assistant secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education. For eight years, she was director of the Mississippi State Department of Education Office of Technology, with responsibilities ranging from technology to textbooks to professional development. Her local experience includes being a teacher and district-level school administrator.

A swimming fish had many unanswered questions about his world. One day, a dolphin swam by, so the fish asked it, "Where is the ocean?"

The dolphin answered, "You are swimming in it." The startled fish replied, "This is not the ocean. This is water." He swam off feeling frustrated.

Sometimes, members of the Alliance for Community Media, like the fish, may see water when we should see the ocean. What does that have to do with public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access and community media?

We may be P, or E, or G, but seldom do we see ourselves as PEG. We are a region or a locality, not a community united in the cause of preserving free speech, democracy, and local voices. We who are so committed to localism may find it hard to think nationally, and perhaps globally—that is, we see water, not ocean.

Now is the time to think about ourselves and our world differently. On January 20, 2009, change came to our country. No one knows exactly what that will mean for us, individually or collectively, but we do know that things are and will be different.

In community media, our world has been changing for more than two years, as state franchising, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) orders, and new technologies have run roughshod over our mission. Though we wish we could turn back the clock to more stable times, it is a new day, both in Washington, D.C., and across the country. We must harness our power as an ocean of people who cherish using media for local expression, rather than focus on the water that threatens to drown us.

How do we act on this sentiment?

Stay involved with the national and local political landscape. This issue of *Community Media Review* is full of information to help you stay connected—articles about our challenges,

inspiring success stories, and insights into FCC policymaking. Our July conference in Portland, Oregon, Community Media at the Crossroads, will be the best yet for networking, learning, and growing as a community. Plan to attend!

Help us tell our story. The national goals and mission of the Alliance are important primarily as they relate to our members' local well-being. At this particular political time and place, however, we must seek broad solutions on a national scale, working simultaneously from a national *and* local vantage point. Most Members of Congress care passionately about their states, districts, and local needs. Ensuring that each of them knows you and the value that community media brings to their constituents is critical and only *you* can do that, by making it personally important. We will be the voice in Washington, but that is never enough. We can help with materials and messaging, but you must act locally for us to have real impact.

Join us in taking advantage of new technologies. The Alliance national office will be launching a new website and other vehicles to keep us connected, involved, and united. Look for these new tools as the year unfolds: Support us as we take risks, and forgive us if we stumble in rolling them out. Try these social media tools out yourself or at your center; they may enable us to tell our story to different audiences and build fresh support.

Renew your membership. I know that your center's budget probably has just been cut. Yet this is the time to help us focus on the ocean—our community needs YOU.

I hope you will read this issue of *Community Media Review* from cover to cover, and talk to others about what you learned. Reach out to others who don't know or understand who we are or why we exist. Let's see ourselves as connected to the larger ocean, not just the water around us. In Alliance,

Helen

From the Board Chair

Planting the Seeds for Future Growth

■ BY MATT SCHUSTER



As we look at the year that lies ahead, we know it will be filled with change, challenges, and opportunities. We must look at the decisions we make on a daily basis for our organizations, our communities, and ourselves within a larger strategic context. It is easy to become primarily focused on the challenges we face due to the economic downturn, the negative effects of recent statewide franchising, and cash-strapped budgets. It is times like this that ultimately test our resilience and our ability to adapt.

The Alliance for Community Media had a number of key successes during 2008. As a central part of our national conference in Washington, D.C., in July, we launched the national Keep Us Connected campaign. The groundwork laid in the initial phases of this effort has begun to show results. In September, Congress held the second hearing focused on issues related to delivery of public, educational, and governmental (PEG) services. This hearing was a direct result of our members' work with their congressional delegations.

Also in September, the national board of directors of the Alliance hired Helen Soulé as our new executive director. Dr. Soulé brings an extensive background and skill set to the position. We are excited to work with her to build upon the successes of past executive leadership and to continue to strengthen the national organization.

Our success depends upon all of us working on the local, regional, and national levels. Countless members give their time, energy, and commitment to the organization. Our regional and affiliate leadership works hard to add value to the national organization by adding services and by coordinating efforts on the local level. I would like to thank each of you for the time you spend building community through media.

We also recognize the people who have contributed financially to the Keep Us Connected Campaign to help provide a financial base for our work. National advocacy and legal challenges are expensive and require resources beyond those provided through membership dues. Your financial support of the organization provides the foundation for our legal and advocacy work.

As we face minor setbacks and difficulties, we have to keep our focus on our ultimate goal—strong and vibrant community media networks that provide opportunities for everyone to communicate and help build their communities. This is the time to sow the seeds for growth. As our challenges become opportunities, we will be ready to quickly move ahead.

As technologies and political leadership change, it's time to be bold. We must double our efforts on behalf of our communities to improve the regulatory environment, to educate our elected officials at all levels, and to embrace all media that can serve our communities. No advance has ever been made without working hard, dealing with adversity, and making sacrifices. Those who succeed are committed to laboring day after day in the marathon called public interest work. I look forward to working with all of you as we reenergize our commitments and continue our important work.

Matt

Matt Schuster is chair of the ACM Board of Directors. He manages the national award-winning government access channel MetroTV in Louisville, Kentucky. Previously, he was cable TV coordinator/station manager for Lake County, Illinois, and Meridian Township, Michigan. All three channels received multiple national awards from NATOA and the Alliance's Hometown Video Festival, including Overall Excellence in Government Programming. Matt also serves on the ACM Central States Region Board. He received his Master of Arts in Telecommunications from Michigan State University. Contact him at matt.schuster@louisvilleky.gov.

PEG Access Vital for Localism and Diversity in Media

■ BY JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN

In articulating its franchising procedures and development standards, Congress intended for cable systems to cater to the interests of their localities and provide diverse sources of content.

Localism, competition, and diversity in media have been overriding goals of Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) since the very beginning of broadcast media in the United States. Though we have seemingly ambiguous guiding principles, we are expected to produce real, tangible results in these areas.

For years, I have expressed concerns that the media industry is becoming too concentrated, and that the Commission is falling short in its aims to achieve diversity and localism. This is why the work that all of you in the public, educational, and governmental (PEG) community do is so important. PEG channels offer an effective means of expanding local and diverse programming. It is in the interest of all citizens to protect PEG channels and the great service that they provide to their communities.

Congress established policies for federal, state, and local regulation of cable television in the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, also known as the Cable Act. In articulating its franchising procedures and development standards, Congress intended for cable systems to cater to the interests of their localities and provide diverse sources of content.

When it enacted this legislation, Congress treated cable television as a great community-builder of the future. The legislative history of the Cable Act indicates that the increased number of channels on cable television systems would allow for third-party access to the systems. This, in turn, would create diverse information sources for consumers and minimize the need to regulate cable content. Congress saw public access channels on cable television systems as “the video equivalent of the speaker’s soapbox or the electronic parallel to the printed leaflet.”

PEG networks have real significance in creating strong communities. These networks provide news and information that is pertinent and uniquely tailored to their viewers, including coverage of local governmental and educational institutions. This type of content allows small entities, such as clubs and non-profit organizations, to get their messages out to large, local audiences, which may otherwise be beyond their reach. PEG facilities and access are important resources for thousands of communities throughout the country.

Yet we continue to face obstacles in achieving the level of success that Congress envisioned. Two years ago, the FCC laid out new rules meant to provide guidance on prohibiting franchising authorities from unreasonably refusing to award competitive franchises for the provision of cable service under Section 621(a)(1) of the Communications Act. As part of a plan to eliminate unreasonable barriers to entry into the cable market and encourage investment in competitive facilities, the Commission determined that it would be unreasonable to refuse to award a competitive franchise if a local franchising authority denied an application based on a new entrant’s failure to meet its obligation to provide reasonable access to PEG networks.

Unlike the federal government, many local officials are directly accountable to their citizens and have a better grasp of the specific needs of their communities. In future decisions, the FCC must follow Congress’s lead in having faith in localities and entrusting them to make decisions about PEG access.

The Commission continues to articulate the worthy policy goals of localism and diversity, and I am optimistic that we can make great strides in this area over the next few years. We face ample opportunities for our actions to align with our rhetoric.

It is our responsibility to assure access to cable television by groups and individuals other than those who own the franchise. Community access on PEG channels contributes greatly to the creation of an informed and engaged local citizenry. Continuing to work on reestablishing this important content is a crucial step towards achieving diversity.

Another important component in reaching our overarching goal is achieving diversity in media ownership. Minorities and women are currently underrepresented in media ownership, limiting the variety of voices in the information marketplace. Minorities make up 34 percent of the U.S. population, but only own 3.15 percent of television stations. The statistics for women's ownership are equally abysmal. Women comprise 51 percent of the U.S. population, yet they only own 5.87 percent of television stations. By promoting women media ownership among women and minorities, consumers will have access to a wide range of content and perspectives from an array of sources.

The future of localism looks bright in other forms of electronic communication, as well. Our continuing efforts to promote competitive video offerings and broadband deployment will provide opportunities for new voices to be heard in our media. We are working diligently to create partnerships with civil rights organizations and local communities in order to democratize this process.

I commend the Alliance for Community Media for its efforts in keeping diversity and localism at the forefront of the public radar. With your continued support, we can ensure that the Federal Communications Commission gives these important policy goals real consideration in all future actions. ■CMR



About FCC Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

FCC Commissioner Adelstein was confirmed November 14, 2002, then reconfirmed November 20, 2004. Before joining the FCC, Adelstein served for fifteen years as a staff member in the United States Senate. For the last seven years, he was a senior legislative aide to United States Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), where he advised Senator Daschle on telecommunications, financial services, transportation, and other key issues. Previously, he served as professional staff member to the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

In future decisions, the FCC must follow Congress's lead in having faith in localities and entrusting them to make decisions about PEG access.

AT&T Has the Capability to Treat PEG and Commercial Channels Comparably

U-Verse Fails to Use Modern Technology on PEG Channels

■ BY ANDREW AFFLERBACH

The full text of this report and drawings are available at www.alliancecm.org.

Overview and Methodology

The use of Internet Protocol video technology (IPTV) does not force public, educational, and governmental (PEG) programs to be provided with degraded picture quality and in difficult-to-operate channel menus. This report presents an overview of the various processes involved in the delivery of PEG channels in an IPTV system, such as AT&T's U-verse. The report establishes that any degradation observed in the quality of PEG channels—as compared to commercial channels—is not due to the use of Internet Protocol, or IP-based transmission, but rather to the particular configuration used by AT&T for PEG channels.

The report concludes that the degraded PEG viewer experience compared to that of the commercial channels can be eliminated by replacing or reconfiguring systems and components used for PEG delivery with components and configurations equivalent to those used for commercial channels.

Encoding of PEG Video

PEG channels can be encoded at the same quality as commercial channels. At the studio or origination location, PEG channels are produced in an analog or serial digital format and con-

The ideal approach would be to select settings and equipment that have been demonstrated to provide the quality of the commercial programs.

verted to the specific Internet Protocol (IP) digital format required by AT&T. The quality of the encoding is a significant contributor to the viewed quality of the PEG signal. AT&T's technical specifications state that its PEG programming uses the Windows Media Video 9 (WMV9) format, a widely-used technology with a range of quality settings. (AT&T provides supported encoding specifications in their "PEG Equipment & Transport Information" Version 7 document.)

Similar to PEG channels, IP digital encoding is also applied by AT&T to its commercial channels. A typical standard definition broadcast television signal has a screen resolution of approximately 720 x 480. Lower resolution encoding results in a less sharp picture. This is evident when an NTSC program—broadcast quality analog

television signal—is recorded to a VHS video tape.

It is possible to achieve similar quality for delivering PEG channels by ensuring that the encoding of PEG signals is also done at a resolution of 720 x 480, equivalent to that of a typical professional standard definition studio environment. The ideal approach would be to select settings and equipment that have been demonstrated to provide the quality of the commercial programs.

Transport of PEG Video

Technology to preserve the quality of PEG audio and video signals while in transit to the AT&T network is readily available.

After the video is encoded and arranged into packets at the PEG origination location, it is then transported to AT&T's video headend. The link between the originating PEG location and AT&T's headend must be of sufficient capacity to carry the encoded video. The amount of capacity required on the link is dictated by the encoding schemes used, and directly impacts the quality of the PEG signal.

One way to preserve the PEG picture quality is to dedicate a sufficiently large circuit between the PEG origination site and the AT&T headend. This is a technique commonly used by cable

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Kensington, Maryland.



operators. If a shared line is used, AT&T could use “quality of service” (QoS) mechanisms.

Insertion of PEG Video into the AT&T Programming Lineup

PEG channels need not be inserted into the program lineup in a manner different from commercial channels.

Typically, at the headend, once the video signals are received from the respective originating locations, video broadcast servers generate an individual signal, or stream, for each user. The other alternative is for the server to deliver the video to a viewer by transmitting a single multicast stream (discussed further below).

In order to deliver comparable picture quality, the PEG programming must be made available to the AT&T broadcast servers in the same manner that the commercial programs are available. Generally, in IP video systems, broadcast video servers receive channels, or signals, from their sources (studios, satellite downlinks, antenna feeds). These channels then reside inside the video servers much in the same manner as individual pages on a website reside within web servers. Parameters on the video server should be set so that the PEG programming is treated in the same manner as commercial programming.

Transmission of AT&T Programming to Viewers

IP-based video technologies offer greater flexibility to localize channel lineups, not less.

In an IP system, the viewer selects a particular channel using his or her set-top box. Although the box may represent the program as a fixed channel, in fact the server at the headend streams the requested program to the set-top box in a similar manner as the video you receive by pointing and clicking on a computer is streamed from an website.

Channels that are available to a subscriber's set-top box are determined strictly by AT&T's service provisioning for each subscriber, such as the service package that the subscriber has signed up for, his or her billing status, etc. It would be feasible to create a custom channel lineup associated with the address and franchising area for a particular set-top box. This could simplify the customer's access to programming produced by his or her local PEG channels instead of having to browse through a long list of PEG channels and then select and request the desired local channels.

Summary

Rather than forcing the degradation of PEG channel quality, IP video can

It is technologically possible to deliver public, educational, and governmental (PEG) programming over the AT&T video system with comparable quality and functionality to the commercial channels.

potentially expand the flexibility of video service and provide consumers with greater access to local channels. Based on the following, it is technologically possible to deliver public, educational, and governmental (PEG) programming over the AT&T video system with comparable quality and functionality to the commercial channels:

- PEG channels can be encoded at the same quality as commercial channels.
- Technology to preserve the quality of PEG audio and video signals while in transit to the AT&T network headend is readily available.
- PEG channels need not be inserted into the program lineup in a manner different from commercial channels. ■CMR

Open Letter to President Obama: Keep Us Connected

Photo courtesy Drew Taylor



Prior to the election, then presidential candidate Barack Obama conducting a Town Hall in Salem, Oregon.

**We need community
media, now more
than ever.**

Dear President Obama:

In this issue of the *Community Media Review* (CMR), you'll see the tip of the iceberg of our work in community media and the huge challenges we face. Each of these stories has a common thread. In the 1960s, local governments worked with their communities to establish television channels, equipment, and funding necessary for community media. Now, nearly four decades after those efforts began, community media organizations and programmers are making a difference with more than one million hours of invaluable, unique programming each year at bargain basement prices.

My career is in community media. Like you, I'm a community organizer—I say the term with pride. I've seen what communities can do when they are connected. Like my colleagues, I know we need community media more than ever to address the challenges Americans face today.

In looking at the roots of community media, the three great movements during the 1960s—civil rights, equal rights for women, and those advocating an end to the Vietnam War—inspired unprecedented grassroots political activity. People wanted the means to speak for themselves, a need that grew in time with the environmental movement and the intensely divisive issues of equal rights for gays and lesbians, abortion, gun ownership, and the size of government.

At the same time, local governments and schools had increasing needs for internal connection and a link to their communities. Nonprofit organizations required assistance in using technology to reach those in need of their services. Community media on cable TV filled the void.

After that humble start nearly 40 years ago, thousands of groups and individuals are working to connect communities, neighbors, and families. This issue of *CMR* highlights a few of these connections.

- In Illinois, Chicago Access Network (CAN TV) links the Latino community with health, jobs, immigration, housing, and legal services provided by local nonprofits.
- In Georgia, Atlanta's PeopleTV provides the training and tools that residents are using to connect local neighborhoods with the series *Sidewalk Stories*.
- In Arizona, Access Tucson works with the Burundi refugee community and Catholic Healthcare West to make African language television shows that teach ways to increase childhood health and welfare and to decrease youth injuries.



Alan Bushong is Executive Director of CCTV in Salem, Oregon. Hired in 1989 to start CCTV after 11 years with Austin Community Television, Alan also served three stints on the Alliance for Community Media Board, including serving as president from 1995–1998, the time during which the Alliance won its Supreme Court case protecting community media.

- In New York City, BronxNet enables its Latino community to prepare residents for healthy living and to deal with the problems teenagers face daily.
- In Oregon, outside Portland, MetroEast provides the tools and training for youth who aspire to be filmmakers and media professionals.
- In Washington, Seattle's SCAN Community Media offers summer video camps that give young people a road beyond YouTube.

These are just a few of the places with the vision and commitment to make cable TV franchises serve their community.

With cell phones, e-mail, the Internet, and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, we have unprecedented peer-to-peer communications. It's great! We can download information whenever we want it.

With America's economic woes and declining budgets for local governments, schools, and nonprofit organizations, communication is critical, just at the time it will receive less funding than in prior years. We need community media, now more than ever. That's why networks use broadcast channels and create their content for their channels. Connecting local governments, schools, community organizations, and individuals requires every means possible, plus the tools and training needed to create the programs. With spiraling debt and a struggling economy, community media are—more than ever before—the best deal in town.

Keeping us connected is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It's an American issue.

It's an issue of having vision and courage, of people being on the same side, of no challenge being too great. After Hurricane Katrina, many people sacrificed to help storm victims resume their lives and restore their homes. This current set of challenges also will take all of us working together, and to work together we need connection and community. We need community media in all of our neighborhoods, towns, and cities, connecting people who have never before worked together.

It's a privilege to work in this noble movement. And it's an honor to work with so many talented colleagues on the Keep Us Connected issue of *Community Media Review* that shares our message with the world.

Alan Bushong, Volunteer Guest Editor

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Special thanks to Barbara Popovic, Rob Brading, and Bunnie Reidel for their advice, editing, and general brilliance in shaping this edition.

Partnership for PEG

■ BY LIBBY BEATY

NATOA members find themselves having to fight harder each day to ensure that channels are provided and PEG support gets paid.

The past several years have been very challenging to public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access television. The statewide/state-issued franchising laws that passed in nineteen states have threatened the very existence of PEG and, in some instances, have resulted in PEG channels being shut down. It is clear from the two congressional hearings held this year that the cable television industry greatly underestimated the value of PEG channels, not only to local communities but to congressional leadership.

As part of our ongoing efforts to protect and preserve PEG, the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) has worked diligently to advocate for PEG at the state and federal level. As sister associations, NATOA and the Alliance for Community Media (ACM) have worked hand-in-hand to reverse the harm to PEG that has resulted from state legislation.

There is no doubt that an industry-wide effort has been launched to weaken or eliminate PEG. Whether it's the closing of studios in Indiana, the channel-slamming into the digital tier that took place in Michigan, or the provision of PEG in a menu-driven IPTV platform, it is not just one video provider treating PEG badly—it is several providers. And it seems they are taking their cues from one another, feeding off the perceived “success” they claim in thwarting PEG and its use at every turn. Some would even say that there's an appearance that the providers are now acting collectively in their determination to undermine PEG.

NATOA members, so many of whom have fought hard in franchise negotiations to obtain or keep PEG support, understand the industry will do as little as possible under the law. Our

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members have long understood that in order for the public interest to be protected, someone has to make sure that the law is being enforced. Yet, in the statewide/state-issued franchises, enforcement has been stripped away from local government and cable regulators. In most of those states even the agencies that are supposed to regulate video providers (such as the secretary of state's office or the utility regulatory body) have no enforcement capability. Because of the lack of enforcement, there are more violations with little to no recourse except for lawsuits.

Even in locations where traditional franchising has not been overruled by state law, NATOA members find themselves having to fight harder each day to ensure that channels are provided and PEG support gets paid. Of course, the actions of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have not made that battle any easier, nor has the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit's refusal to rehear the FCC Video Franchising case.

Despite the long and arduous attacks and let-downs, there is hope on the horizon. As was witnessed at the congressional hearing on



Libby Beaty is the executive director of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

September 17, 2008, chaired by Representative José Serrano (D-NY), one congressional office after another expressed its dissatisfaction with the treatment of PEG under statewide/state-issued franchising. One of the harshest rebukes came from Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL) when he expressed agitation that while AT&T had been invited to participate in the hearing, they chose not to do so. "On the hearing, if there was any thought by AT&T that the Republican member would help them out let me disabuse them now," said Kirk. "After talking to some of my communities my view on AT&T was: 'and the horse you rode in on.'"

Representative Peter Visclosky (D-IN) came close to yelling at the cable industry's representative when he tried to assert that cable was not involved in the detrimental state legislation. And of course, these representatives sent a letter to the FCC immediately after the hearing, demanding that the FCC investigate how PEG is being treated by the industry. This may prove to be good news. For many years it has been difficult to get the attention of Congress on these matters, but because of the efforts of ACM and NATOA members, they are finally listening.

In preparation for the September hearing, NATOA was happy to have the opportunity to brief Chairman Serrano's chief of staff. For that meeting we prepared a detailed briefing book that included: newspaper articles chronicling industry abuses; the legislative history of PEG and a state-by-state chart of state legislation; a briefing by Dr. Andrew Afflerbach that proves AT&T can deliver PEG in the same way and with the same quality as any other channel on their system; the role PEG plays in emergency preparedness; and fact sheets on institutional networks. We were pleased

because it was evident that staff had used the briefing book in preparation for the hearing.

The work that the ACM did collectively and individually through its members such as Barbara Popovic of Chicago Access Network Television and Michael Max Knobbe of BronxNet was very effective. There is no doubt this work will have a positive payoff for PEG and local regulators.

ACM and NATOA, working together, make us all stronger and certainly more effective not only in the area of advocacy but also in emerging technologies and the ability of our members to capitalize on these developments. In the coming year we will be increasing our efforts to assist our members with the use of new media that will enhance the programming available to our communities. We will be providing additional educational opportunities for members of our programming community to enhance their understanding of state and federal laws that affect them, to improve their production quality and techniques, and to continue the exemplary tradition that PEG programming brings to our communities.

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It is a never-ending job to ensure that the public interest is at the forefront of the work that we do.

We have many challenges and opportunities ahead. There will be changes at the FCC and in Congress, plus a new presidential administration. We will have to work together to educate the new commissioners, Members of Congress, and their staffs about the importance of PEG in our communities. Luckily our organizations have very articulate members and a great message.

We have the opportunity to ensure that communications policies coming out of the new Congress, the new Federal Communications Commission, and the new administration reflect the public interest. We have the opportunity to ensure that these policies reflect local community needs and interests. It is a never-

ending job to ensure that the public interest is at the forefront of the work that we do. It will remain imperative that our elected officials at all levels—local, state, and federal—be reminded of the important democratic values of this medium and the need for its continued availability in our society.

When necessary, we must also not shy away from using the courts in our effort to protect our communities and the citizens they serve. The constant refrain must be that the availability of public, educational, and governmental access programming in our communities and to our citizens is of vital interest to our democracy, and therefore, it must be preserved. ■CMR



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The Turning Tide: PEG Harms Provide Legislative Impetus

■ BY BUNNIE REIDEL

Early last year I created a Legislative Advocacy Tool Kit for the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA). One element of the tool kit was a state-by-state analysis of statewide or state-issued franchising laws. I read every piece of related legislation and in doing so, I began to see emerging trends in the legislation as the telecom and cable companies became emboldened by their success.

There was one moment when I realized that you could have woken me up in the middle of the night, shoved a piece of legislation in front of my sleepy eyes, and I could have told you whether its primary sponsor was AT&T or Verizon. AT&T became increasingly “scorched earth” toward PEG, while Verizon was at least willing to make concessions for PEG to include channels and monetary support. In those instances where both AT&T and Verizon were at work, in states like California, AT&T dominated the landscape and Verizon became just another player, like the cable operators.

All Quiet on the State Franchising Front

As we end the fourth year of the state franchising campaign it is now eerily quiet. AT&T is no longer particularly active, because the company has gained all the state-wide franchising laws it wanted. Verizon, too, has acquired all the local franchises it wants without much trouble. Those original

arguments of municipal interference with broadband deployment and competitive roll-out no longer ring true to either state legislatures or even the general public. The so-called astroturf groups, such as former U.S. Representative and Republican House Majority Leader Dick Armey’s infamous “Freedom Works,” have moved on to newer and just as green pastures, such as net neutrality.

Since AT&T promised to create jobs as part of their pitch, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) happily jumped into bed with them on state franchising. Yet in recent months, AT&T—like many companies around the world—has announced layoffs and cutbacks in capital expenditures. And gradually,

as states wake up with the hangover caused by guzzling too many empty promises from corporations, the consequences of the state franchising frenzy are becoming crystal clear.

Broken promises: rates aren’t lower, broadband no better, no new jobs

The promise of competitive pricing has failed, as cable rates continue to rise between 6 percent and 25 percent (depending on the tier) in areas where so-called competition exists. The promise of broadband deployment also has failed, as AT&T cherry-picks where it will deploy its anemic DSL, which can hardly be called broadband anyway. The promise of new jobs has failed, because even when AT&T was



DATV members protest against SB117 on Courthouse Square in Downtown Dayton.



Malcolm, son of DATV member Basim Blunt, helps his father fight against the passage of SB117.

hiring, they were hiring staff for their business wireless call centers that had nothing to do with cable franchising regulations. Meanwhile, PEG access centers and municipalities are taking the hardest hit. Even in states where state franchising didn't pass, incumbent cable operators are aggressively attacking PEG just because they think they can.

PEG access and municipalities harmed

Recently in New York and Connecticut, Cablevision announced it would slam PEG channels into the digital tier, taking PEG off of the basic tier and charging customers an additional \$5 per month to receive the channels. Connecticut's attorney general wrote the Department of Public Utility

It's been a bumpy and ugly ride but there is no doubt, at this time, the positive legislative momentum is on PEG's side.

Control with his opinion that the move was illegal. And while New York state law clearly states that PEG must be on the basic tier, the head of the Public Service Commission is waiting to see what the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has to say about it.

These moves in the Northeast mirror Comcast's slamming of PEG channels in Michigan, which resulted in a congressional hearing. The practice was then thwarted by a restraining order, and, most recently, prompted the U.S. District Court in Detroit to issue a directive to the FCC to answer seven questions regarding PEG channel slamming. Cablevision and Comcast are not alone in this endeavor—Brighthouse in Florida and Charter in Nevada are also channel slamming.

In northern Indiana, Comcast gave communities 30 days to develop plans to manage access. When the communities couldn't move that quickly, Comcast summarily closed down the facilities. These closures are a direct violation of Indiana's state franchising laws. However, small communities find it difficult to file complaints with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC). And even if they do, the IURC has proven to be highly inefficient in enforcing the law.

Access centers in Ohio will soon have to pay cable operators and new entrants the cost of transmitting the PEG channels. These costs could run as high as \$125,000 for some communities, well beyond the capacity of already struggling PEG centers.

Bunnie Reidel founded Reidel Communications in 2005, serving the federal and local governments and nonprofit organizations. She advises regulators and elected officials at all levels, specializing on telecommunications issues and the First Amendment. Prior to 2005, Bunnie served six years as executive director of the Alliance for Community Media..



Because it can, Time Warner will be closing its public access operations in the City of Los Angeles, due to the provisions in the Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act (DIVCA). Ironically, Los Angeles has never been supportive of public access. In fact, producers are waging a fierce battle to get Los Angeles to use a portion of the 3 percent PEG support for public access.

There are many more PEG access horror stories with which many in our community are familiar. And it is certain that PEG managers, producers, and supporters have plenty of wounds from past skirmishes, in which the elusive “public interest” has always been embattled. However, those winds may very well be starting to shift.

Why? Primarily because cable operators and telecommunications companies always overplay their hand and they almost always never follow through on their promises. It doesn’t take a Ph.D. to figure out that there still is no real widespread competition. Ask the folks in Texas, where competition exists only in communities where the household income and housing prices are 150 percent above the state average. Ask the folks in Kansas, where competition exists only in Overland Park, a wealthy suburb of Kansas City.

In almost every state that passed statewide or state-issued franchising laws, the spoils went to the wealthiest areas. In North Carolina, now almost three years after their state law passed, AT&T has yet to build a thing or to pass a single home. Instead,

the company offers the triple play of phone, DSL, and satellite television. And with the recent announcement of layoffs and a retreat from infrastructure investment, the twin arguments that competition creates new jobs and broadband will roll out soon are rendered obsolete.

As was learned in the September House of Representatives hearings on Capitol Hill, some Members of Congress—especially those who frequently use PEG to communicate with their constituents—consider PEG to be an important community function. The cable and telecom

companies seriously misjudged that support when they began channel slamming PEG into a digital Siberia.

The year ahead holds great promise for correcting the harms that have been done to PEG, which may even find itself in a position of growth and expansion rather than one of weakness and extinction. Now is the time to make appointments to visit your elected representatives at every level and to get them into the studios at your stations. Although it has been a bumpy and ugly ride, there is no doubt that the positive legislative momentum is on PEG’s side. ■CMR



Support for Media Bridges’ Youth Media Project, and programs like it, will end under Ohio’s new state franchising law. Pictured here are members of the program learning the ropes from Sara Mahle, Media Bridges’ education coordinator.

A Case Study in New York

The Loss of PEG Channels on the Basic Tier of Service

■ BY MARYANN ARRIEN

Keeping people connected to PEG channels is a challenge when cable companies require converter boxes for them.

In the small town of Putnam Valley, New York, population 11,000, Cablevision is now requiring all subscribers to have a digital converter box to receive PEG channels. Cablevision made a poorly advertised offer of a free box for one television set for existing customers. All others, including all new customers, must pay an extra \$6.50 a month rental fee. Here is the story of our fight to keep PEG access channels affordable.

In mid-August 2008, some Cablevision subscribers to basic or family cable received a card in the mail from the cable company stating that, as of September 16, 2008, they would no longer receive their PEG channels. The card instructed customers who wanted to keep these channels to call a 1-800 number (which had a fast busy signal) or go to the company's website. Unfortunately, the card gave no deadline for claiming a box. Apparently, though, customers could get a free digital box if they claimed it by October 16, 2008. But that offer was valid only for existing customers with no change in level of service, with a limit of one box per household. Any new cable subscribers or families with more than one television would be out of luck. After that, in order to get the PEG channels, an extra piece of equipment, which carried a \$6.50/month rental fee, would be necessary for each TV.

By the time I found out about this offer from residents who called me with questions, only three weeks remained until the deadline. I produced and televised a public service announcement (PSA) spot for the 16 days before the local channels went dark for many of our residents. I put the PSA on our town website (www.putnamvalley.com/TVChannels.htm) and encouraged other towns in the affected tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and

Connecticut to use the PSA. Cablevision had not deigned to advertise this free box offer on the public access stations that it runs in our area. I could already see that fewer people were watching the town meetings or the TV Scroll because they could not watch it on a particular television anymore.

Confusion reduced free converter box claims

I did some presentations at our Putnam Valley Senior Center and found that confusion prevented many people from taking the free offer. Cablevision customer service consistently gave wrong information and tried to sell people higher levels of service, a practice known as upselling. Even when I had to get a free digital box to see the return signal for our live broadcasts, our town was charged for the box. When I called, I had to argue chapter and verse of our franchise agreement. Then the next bill arrived. We were charged again. Although it's fixed now, I can only imagine what ordinary customers were going through to receive their boxes.

After three presentations, the seniors were still confused about why they needed the free digital box. They thought that the transition to digital broadcast TV in February 2009 meant they would not need the box. But when I spoke to Cablevision personnel, they confirmed that all new basic cable customers, both before and after the digital transition in February 2009, would not get the local channels unless they rented a digital box for \$6.50/month.

Appealing to the NY State Public Service Commission

On August 26, I wrote an e-mail to the New York State Public Service Commission about

the short notice of the digital box in which I remarked, “I find it so inequitable that only those residents who can afford more services can get their local access channels.” I pointed out that if someone wanted to make a show complaining about it on public access, the rest of the people affected could not watch it, since they no longer get the local channels. However, the analog local cable news channel would be available without a box on broadcast basic. But that was Cablevision’s voice, not the voice of the access community. I carbon copied this letter to all my local state representatives, the county, local town councilpersons, and the ACM lists. The response I got back from the Public Service Commission (PSC) was essentially that no comment could be given at this time.

Media reform activist Bill Huston had been monitoring the thread on the ACM listserve and gave me a very good piece of advice. He explained that what I had written was essentially an informal complaint—to which a response is not technically required by law. Without a formal complaint, however, very little could be accomplished in this matter. I tried to convince my town and county to write such a formal complaint to the PSC, but the key problem was money.

Huston had provided me with legal templates from old cases that went before the PSC, but I still had to convince my town board to submit the formal complaint. I studied the relevant New York codes, rules, and regulations, as well as public service law, and identified the key to a complaint. I wrote a letter to my town board on behalf of the Community Media Department, arguing that even if the claim that only 11 percent of subscribers would switch to a different plan to avoid the conver-



Community Media Coordinator MaryAnn Arrien tells subscribers how to order a free digital converter from Cablevision.

sion fees was accurate, that shift could represent a significant loss of franchise fees every year. The main competitor to Cablevision in our area was Direct TV, which does not pay any franchise fees because it is via satellite.

Since our franchise fees were roughly \$200,000 per year, if 11 percent of subscribers canceled their Cablevision and turned to the more inexpensive Direct TV because they were only keeping Cablevision for the local channels, then that could represent a loss of roughly \$20,000 per year of revenue for the town. The board passed the resolution on October 15, and the next day sent its formal complaint to the Public Service Commission and the respondent, Cablevision Systems Corporation, copying State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo on it.

According to the return receipt, Cablevision received their copy of the complaint on Monday, October 20. That very morning at approximately 11:30 a.m., I received a call from Cablevision saying that the free digital box offer had been extended to December 31, 2008. They asked me to spread the word, since it was known that I was corresponding with a lot of municipalities in New York. In their eyes, publicity remained the only problem.

The damage done? When a new person moves into town, who needs the local town and school information on day one more than

Cablevision customer service consistently gave wrong information and tried to sell people higher levels of service. Even when I had to get a free digital box to see the return signal for our live broadcasts, our town was charged for the box. When I called I had to argue chapter and verse of our franchise agreement.

he or she does? Even our local Putnam County Senior Center was told that they weren't eligible for the free digital box once because they were "commercial" and again because they are "not residential." After I made another call to Cablevision, the company gave us a box for the Senior Center because it is on town property. But none of our schools have received the free digital box. Why? Confusion about the rules.

Even more worrisome are cable subscribers in the rest of the state, most of whom never even heard of the free digital box offer. I learned that addressing the matter with the Office of the Attorney General was an important component to fighting the loss of the local channels. Even if the matter never came before the PSC or was defeated, if enough consumer complaints were received by the attorney general's office, it could prompt a separate investigation. So I sent a copy of the complaint form to the e-mail list, and encouraged my

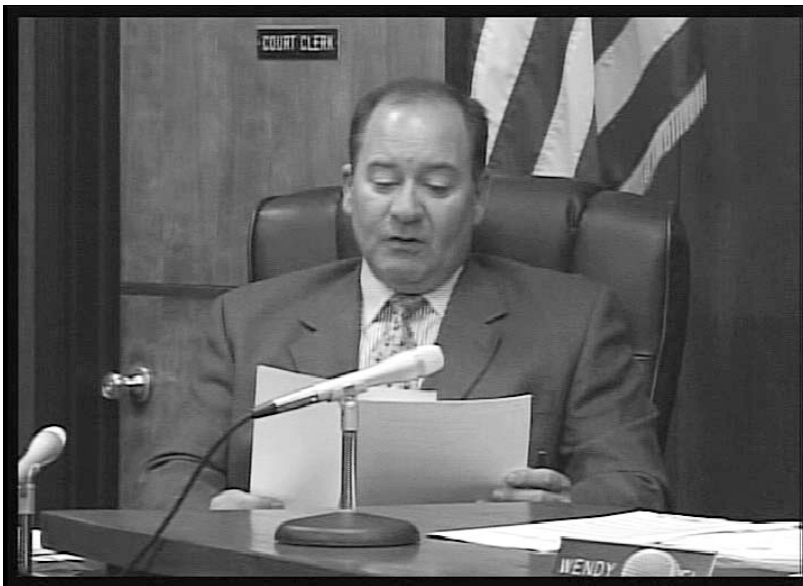
local residents to pick up a form at the Town Hall and send it in. Even if a few consumer complaints were received from various towns, it could end up benefiting the entire state if the attorney general found that the loss of the local channels from basic cable was illegal.

In the meantime, our formal complaint to the PSC never showed up on the commission's website and was never given a case number. "In response to my question, PSC staff said that Cablevision and the town were required to 'try and work it out' before the complaint could be posted." No decision would be made by the PSC until the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made a ruling on digital delivery of the PEG channels. In order for a petition to automatically be put on the PSC website, it would require 25 signatures.

Alliance for Community Media testifies to House Subcommittee

Even though the formal complaint has stalled, on September 17, 2008, members of the Alliance for Community Media testified before the U.S. House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government during a general hearing on PEG Access. ACM New York Chair Michael Max Knobbe of Bronxnet and Barbara Popovic of Chicago Access Network TV testified before the committee about this form of channel slamming.

I knew other communities needed to see this hearing. The Alliance office provided a DVD of the congressional hearing, I added titles and the hearing was shown in several municipalities. After about a week of airings the people of Putnam Valley realized that what was being done was really questionable. Monica Desai, FCC Media Bureau chief, expressed her opinion that this removal of PEG channels from the basic tier of service may be found to be simply an enforcement issue. So there was hope.



Putnam Valley, New York, Councilman Gene Yetter reads the resolution to file a complaint with the Public Service Commission.

Suddenly, on November 4, a press release from Multichannel News came my way through Steve Pierce of the New York Media Alliance (<http://benton.org/node/18503>). It said that as of October 30, the FCC was probing at least ten cable companies by seeking data dating back to November 2006 concerning allegations made by *Consumer Reports* that cable operators are moving channels to digital and then charging consumers to rent digital boxes to maintain access to the same number of channels. Cablevision was one of the companies. This possible enforcement action was promising, since it had direct bearing on the PEG channels being moved up to the digital realm that required extra equipment rental in order to view them.

Again, I called my mentor Bill Huston for advice. He said that even an informal complaint to the FCC was worth doing. Years ago he had written a letter to the agency about another issue, and was astounded that it was fully investigated. My town supervisor then went online and wrote an informal complaint to the FCC asking for their help for the Town of Putnam Valley.

Playing games with numbers

I returned from a brief vacation to see new correspondence between Cablevision and the FCC. Cablevision was seeking an FCC determination that Putnam Valley may no longer regulate entry-level basic service tier rates due to the presence of “effective competition” by other video providers. The competitiveness criteria necessitate two other competitors and a 15 percent penetration. These competitors were Direct TV, which we knew about, and Dish Network, which doesn’t really advertise here.

Cablevision quoted a 15.1 percent penetration rate. Our zip code is not all Cablevision subscribers, mind you, as a portion of our town is Comcast, and we don’t have our PEG chan-

nels there. The footnote of Cablevision’s analysis says that they mapped all the nine-digit ZIP codes that are either wholly or partially within a franchise area. They applied statistical analysis to gain that 0.1 percent to get the whopping figure of 15.1 percent to get them off the basic service tier hook! Since there is a difference of just 3.76 subscribers between 15 percent and 15.1 percent, we intend to write to the FCC disputing this as too close to call. It is clearly an attempt to take our PEG channels off the basic service tier by trying to mislead the FCC with fuzzy math.

I find it so inequitable that only those residents who can afford more services can get their local access channels.

How to take action

If this happens to your viewers, take action by filing formal complaints to state utility agencies, writing your your attorney general’s office, and submitting informal complaints to the FCC either by letter or by online form. Making a formal complaint to the FCC would be best if you can afford it. Complaints can be made to these agencies as a municipality, as an individual, and as an organization.

How many organizations can you involve? How many municipalities can you involve to sign petitions? Letters from state senators or assemblymen can be very useful. The best of all would be your U.S. congressional representatives and senators.

If we win this battle, it will be because of the fervor of people like Representative José Serrano of New York’s 16th District. If we don’t prevail, we have to push harder for a fix in federal legislation. ■CMR



Maryann Arrien is the community media coordinator for the Town of Putnam Valley, New York, managing ‘The Putnam Valley Channels.’

Alliance for Community Media Public Policy Platform

■ DEVELOPED BY THE ALLIANCE PUBLIC POLICY WORKING GROUP

The Alliance for Community Media, a national leader for four decades in putting the dominant electronic media in the hands of the people, addresses new technologies, new delivery systems, and continuing media corporation responsibilities. This newly revised platform calls for corporations to compensate local communities as they make private profits using public rights-of-way and airwaves. Here is the basis for the Alliance's work in 2009.

For democracy to flourish, people must be educated to think critically and become active participants in their government. Since their establishment as part of the regulatory framework for cable television in 1972, local public, education, and governmental (PEG) access channels and centers have played key roles in the lives of our citizens. Through that framework, and the subsequent Cable Act of 1984, all communications networks which use the public rights-of-way and public spectrum must provide the means and support for that participation through community uses of media.

The Alliance for Community Media (the Alliance), the national nonprofit association representing PEG access channels and centers across the United States, is dedicated to advancing democratic ideals by ensuring citizens have access to media resources in their local communities. There are more than 3,000 public, educational, and governmental access (PEG) centers—also called Community Media Centers—around the country that provide people with tools, training, and transmission of their programming on cable channels.

After more than 30 years, it is time for *action* to renew and strengthen the PEG model to ensure its success for the future. In addition, the PEG model should be applied to all entities using public airwaves and occupying space in public rights-of-way, regardless of the

technology or infrastructure. This assures that localism and community participation are not displaced by commercial interests.

Basic Principles for Federal Legislation to Secure the Future of PEG Access

The principles below outline the framework for a 21st-century community media model for PEG channels and centers, thereby securing PEG access for generations to come. The overarching theme is to establish a policy of community reinvestment through PEG access that includes both funds and bandwidth and/or spectrum that will be used for public purposes. This community reinvestment would apply to all infrastructure and service providers and would be based upon the following principles:

- **Guaranteed diverse non-commercial local programming**—Local communities **must** be able to produce and air media that reflects local experiences. PEG is uniquely qualified to provide this service. This guarantee can be achieved by:
 - Dedicating at least five percent of the public airwaves and capacity on communication facilities that occupy public rights-of-way to PEG use for free speech, diverse points of view, local programs, community based education, and political speech.



The PEG model should be applied to all entities using public airwaves and occupying space in public rights-of-way, regardless of the technology or infrastructure. This assures that localism and community participation are not displaced by commercial interests.

The overarching theme is to establish a policy of community reinvestment through PEG access that includes both funds and bandwidth and/or spectrum that will be used for public purposes.

- ❑ Assuring the opportunity for local community dialogue and information universally on any advanced telecommunication service capable of full motion video.
- **Guaranteed equivalent PEG signal quality and functionality**—Include a federal requirement that video franchise holders provide PEG channels at equivalent signal quality and functionality to that provided to local broadcast channels, with the capability of supporting closed captioning, SAP audio, channel surfing, DVR recording, and other functions available to broadcast channels.
- **Guaranteed PEG channel placement on basic tier**—Include a federal requirement that PEG channels be located on the lowest cost, most accessible tier of service adjacent to “must-carry” broadcast channels, without the need for additional equipment. The PEG programming information and channel guide must be treated equally to that of broadcast television.
- **Redefined basic service tier as an obligation of all**—Define the basic service tier as an obligation of every video provider utilizing public property for the delivery of its services, rather than limiting it to rate-regulated communities.
- **Guaranteed funding for providing media literacy skills**—A basic tenet of civil society is that the lives of all members of the community are important, and all members of society should be able to represent themselves in the media. In order to represent themselves, community members need access to the electronic media tools to create content, the training to use the tools, and the mechanism(s) to distribute community content.
 - ❑ Require funding, in addition to the franchise fee, for PEG access of **at least 3 percent** of gross revenues from all infrastructure and service providers and spectrum licensees to support equipment, facilities, training, and services at PEG/Community Media Centers.
- **Protected local control**—Allow the local community which owns the public right-of-way to franchise and determine the best use of the community’s property. Federal law must protect this principle.
- **Enforced compliance with the law**—Provide for enforcement of violations of PEG requirements, including significant monetary penalties, in the federal law. ■CMR

Sidewalk Stories Keep Us Connected through Trying Times

■ BY CHARLOTTE ENGEL AND ANTOINE HAYWOOD

It is challenging to rest easy and wake up with an optimistic vision of your community media center's future when the fate of funding for cable access now lies in the hands of a municipal government that currently struggles against insurmountable financial difficulties. Like many centers throughout the country, Atlanta's People TV (www.peopletv.org) has shifted into high gear to implement new outreach initiatives, forge more strategic partnerships, and launch a local Save Access TV campaign that will keep its mission and programs steadfast against the torrential aftereffects of statewide video franchising.

In March 2007, the Georgia State Legislature passed HB227, the Consumer Choice for Television Act. This house bill, which was originally drafted by BellSouth, enacted a statewide video franchise policy. Under this new legislation, cable and video providers may enter into a

state video franchise agreement which requires no funding for PEG operations, and has conditions for applying and receiving up to three channels, as well as requirements for the number of original, non-duplicative, continuous programming hours per day.

While working hard to lobby against HB227, People TV also prepared to embark upon an innovative project that allows communities in the city of Atlanta and other parts of Fulton County to connect through the documentary series *Sidewalk Stories*.

The concept of *Sidewalk Stories* was inspired by Scribe Video Center's (www.scribe.org) *Precious Places*, which features a number of short documentaries that highlight the history, social progress, and land development of neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. Similar to Philly, Atlanta is a vast metropolis filled with many distinct com-

munities and residents who are eager to share their undocumented stories. After considering People TV's technological resources and staff expertise, its potential to gain substantial project funding, and its ability to recruit community participants, launching such a project in Atlanta quickly became a reality.

The first installment of *Sidewalk Stories* provided an opportunity for residents to use the digital video medium to create five short documentaries about five communities in Fulton County. Each segment was led by a community contact/producer who was responsible for coordinating interviews, selecting locations, and recruiting other volunteers from the community to serve as crew members. People TV staff collaborated with the community producers to conduct field production workshops for crews, ensure scripts were complete, answer technical questions throughout



Prior to recording, Keesha Burke-Henderson discusses program topics with Sekai Henry of Sandtown.



People TV staff created this collage to represent the many faces and voices of Atlanta's neighborhoods in *Sidewalk Stories*.

the production process, and edit the documentary to its final cut.

Parts of *Sidewalk Stories* feature oral histories gathered in Grove Park, Dixie Hills, Norwood Manor, and Autrey Mill. Other parts of the documentary celebrate the growth of the thriving arts center in the Sandtown community and the role that Atlanta's community radio station WRFG 89.3 FM plays to help the Latin American & Caribbean Community Center inform listeners' perspectives on U.S. immigration policy and other global cultural issues.

From the preproduction phase to the premiere screening, volunteers frequently praised the various ways the project helped its participants and audi-

**From the
preproduction phase
to the premiere
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connections.**

ences make connections. Crew members were able to make connections as they conducted interviews, audience members made connections as they learned about the history of neighborhoods and community concerns as expressed by residents, and People TV established new connections with civic organizations.

Sidewalk Stories has enabled People TV to bring a wealth of colorful stories to the forefront while raising awareness about the value of access media and the impact it has on community life. Fortunately, the project has received additional funding to produce a second installment, which will

highlight communities in the East Point, Lakewood, West End, Kirkwood, and Adams Park areas. This next round

Sidewalk Stories Keep Us Connected *(continued)*



Production crew volunteer Donald Fears prepares to record senior residents of Norwood Manor in Atlanta City District 12.

During the past thirty years, community television in Atlanta has played an integral role in keeping citizens connected, primarily through training workshops, youth media programs, volunteer and intern projects, services for nonprofit organizations, and original programming content.

of participants will help continue to illustrate the ways in which outreach activities and media technology can be used as a means for individuals to touch each others' lives while uplifting the value of their communities.

During the past thirty years, community television in Atlanta has played an integral role in keeping citizens connected, primarily through training workshops, youth media programs, volunteer and intern projects, services for non-profit organizations, and original programming content that reflects the abundant talent, critical perspectives, and varied lifestyles that characterize the city's social landscape.

It is unfortunate that by the end of 2009 the city of Atlanta, which takes much pride in being the most progressive and popular destination in the Southeast, may lose its only public access media outlet. We hope that the city's civic leaders see the value of the many ways that People TV touches lives through projects like *Sidewalk Stories*, and find a way to keep the Atlanta community connected. ■CMR



Charlotte Engel is the CEO and general manager of People TV.



Antoine Haywood is the director of community development and FUEL media coordinator of People TV.



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Cable TV Franchise Provides New Community Media Center in Salem, Oregon

■ BY ALAN BUSHONG AND LINDA BERMAN

Community Television (CCTV) in Salem, Oregon recently opened a modern, 9,400-square-foot community media center that occupies most of the first floor of a new building in the heart of downtown Salem. CCTV's new center is the latest step by the City of Salem and Marion County to provide CCTV with the cable TV franchise resources necessary to put this state capital community, which lacks broadcast TV affiliates, on television. Cable television franchising works in Salem and, with the same vision and commitment, it will work all across America.

This award-winning building is the product of a public-private partnership that involved:

- a city, county, and urban renewal district
- a university
- a developer/construction company
- a cable company
- and a nonprofit community media organization.

Three years in the making, the resulting building is an attractive, technically state-of-the-art structure that was recognized with a 2008 Innovative Collaborative Partnership Award by the Oregon Economic Development Association. In addition to CCTV, the first floor will include a coffee shop and small professional office space. Salem's Information

Technology Department occupies the second floor; twenty-seven residential condominiums fill the third, fourth, and fifth floors. Here is a part of the project's history.

CCTV fills local television void in state capital

Sandwiched between the media markets of Portland and Eugene, Salem is the largest state capital with no traditional network affiliate television. The cable TV service area's population exceeds 225,000, yet Salem's presence on Portland or Eugene television stations is often limited to the State Legislature, car wrecks, the Oregon State Fair, and recently, a tragic bomb explosion.

Visionary staff at the City of Salem and Marion County saw the opportunity to fill this community need in the mid-1980s when their twenty-year old franchise with cable operator Viacom was renegotiated. Years earlier, Viacom had purchased a "mom and pop" franchise in West Salem and had expanded across the cable service area with little compensation for the private use of the public right-of-way. The only local programming con-

sisted of telecourses from Chemeketa Community College and internal training video from the Salem Fire Department.

The resulting five-year franchise provided two community channels, \$45,000 in annual capital funds, and an increase from 3 to 5 percent in franchise fees, with the increase committed to community television. Salem contracted with Portland-area Alliance for Community Media and Oregon Association of Telecommu-

nications Officers & Advisors (OATOA) members for advice on creating a successful nonprofit public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access organization.

On August 4, 1989, CCTV was incorporated by Salem Mayor Tom Neilson, Councilor John Shirley, and Marion County Commission Chair Randy Franke. Former

Sandwiched between the media markets of Portland and Eugene, Salem is the largest state capital with no traditional network affiliate television.... Visionaries at the City of Salem and Marion County saw the opportunity to fill this community need.

City Council member and Cable Regulatory Commission Chair Jane Cummins was elected CCTV board president. CCTV was housed rent-free in the temporary home of the Salem Public Library while the library was expanded with space that included 2,400 square feet for CCTV.

Delivering the vision of community TV

While still located in the temporary library and using borrowed equipment, CCTV went on the air with election-related programming, televising election results in May 1990. Later that summer, CCTV purchased a three-camera production truck first used for a state of the schools address. In the fall of 1990, CCTV showed six high school football games that originally were recorded for practice. Community response was overwhelming and positive: the community wanted more local television.

Open government with local C-SPAN style coverage has impact

On November 26, 1990, CCTV provided the first live television coverage of a Salem City Council meeting. Two weeks later, CCTV provided tape-delayed coverage of a Marion County Commission meeting. Salem City councilors told stories of being stopped in the grocery store by constituents who had watched meetings. People who never before were involved in government signed up for community member positions on the Salem Budget Committee and other

boards and commissions. Dave Moss, Salem councilor and Cable Regulatory Commission chair, noted that not everyone agreed with the Salem City Council, but the elevated level of engagement and awareness was great.

In November 1990, Oregonians passed Measure 5, a property tax limitation similar to California's famous Proposition 13. Then, Salem's city manager recommended budget cuts that included a 50 percent decrease in CCTV's already small start-up budget. Despite CCTV's brief history, the community spoke up for local television. CCTV President Jane Cummins



Gracie's Group, shown in Salem's Family Building Blocks video brochure on CCTV.



CCTV's first floor media center, cable TV franchise funded.

addressed her former Salem City Council colleagues, saying, "People in Salem are watching this meeting now because we formed CCTV. We didn't work this hard for something we need so much to see CCTV die on the vine." The Salem City Council responded by voting 9-0 for full CCTV funding.

Salem Chamber of Commerce, Hospital, and City Club start programs

After moving into the expanded library, CCTV opened the studio, taught classes, and brought community organizations and individuals to the community channel. Three groups began broadcasting programs within months. The Salem Area Chamber of Commerce began televising their monthly speaker series, noted for featuring governors and Members of the United States Congress. Salem Hospital televised a premier health series on professional and home health care. And, the Salem City Club televised its bi-monthly speaker series on the top

local public affairs and community issues. Programming was growing.

Salem, Marion County, and CCTV improve the franchise, look for space

After two short franchise extensions, in 1994 the City of Salem, Marion County, and CCTV improved the cable franchise, increasing capital funds from \$45,000 annually to \$150,000 annually through 1999, then 1.5 percent of gross for ten years. That fund now exceeds \$450,000 annually. Current operator Comcast Cable has delivered all franchise resources and provided great support following a series of ownership changes—from Viacom to TCI to AT&T and then to Comcast.

By 2005, CCTV had grown from one shared channel to three channels, from three to 20 mobile production units, and from one to three editing systems. New, locally produced programming had grown to more than 2,000 hours per year; the staff had grown from three to ten; community

members working on and providing programs increased from zero to the hundreds; and the active base of volunteers contributing to CCTV productions rose from a handful to well over a hundred. What did not grow, however, was CCTV's 2,400-square-foot space in the Salem Public Library; due to library needs and property lines, it simply could not be expanded.

295 Church Street—CCTV's last downtown opportunity

In 2006, after several location leads fell through, the City of Salem contacted CCTV to discuss a project just beginning to take shape. The Salem Urban Development Department had purchased the southeast portion of a downtown city block with Community Block Development Grant funds for the purpose of increasing downtown housing. The City of Salem needed to relocate its IT department, which was located in a floodplain (only sandbagging had kept out a massive 1996 flood), and was aware of CCTV's needs.

The pairing of CCTV and IT, the two primary users of the cable system fiber optic INET, had been discussed for years. Nearby Willamette University was interested in purchasing the current IT location that bordered the campus for expansion. Eventually, a five-floor building concept emerged. Long and careful negotiations guided by all of the parties led to success. In November 2007, the partners celebrated with a groundbreaking ceremony.

Alan Bushong is executive director of CCTV (see full bio on p. 10). Linda Berman is the City of Salem's cable officer and has guided the cable franchise and creation and building of CCTV since 1988.



Building completed, connected to cable headend and INET live production sites

After exterior construction was completed during the summer of 2008, CCTV was connected to Comcast's headend and to live production sites via the fiber optic INET. CCTV moved its channel master control between December 3 and 6 and everything else during the next ten days. On December 18, 2008, the building opened with a dedication, followed by two more hours of live programming.

The location is perfect for CCTV: downtown, on the major route to the bridge to West Salem, in the middle of many of CCTV's principal partners. The City of Salem, Marion County, the Elsinore Theater, and the Conference Center are all within three blocks of the new site. The State of Oregon mall and capitol building, plus the center of Willamette University's campus, are within a half-mile.

New center boosts CCTV's new Nonprofit Information Center

CCTV's new building allows services to expand. One favorite program is the 2009 launch of the Nonprofit Information Center for Salem-area organizations. CCTV formed the

Nonprofit Center in response to a request from the City of Salem to assist local human service agencies. CCTV offered those agencies their most requested service—a video brochure. The brochures are designed as a quick introduction that explains the

organization's mission and services, shows staff in action, and details their offices' locations and contact information. With the launch of the Web-based information center, the video brochures will be available to everyone on cable and online.

Sue Miller, executive director of Family Building Blocks, found the brochure

idea immediately appealing. "We are the crisis relief nursery for Marion and Polk Counties," says Miller. "Through all of our programs Family Building Blocks has a single aim: to keep the children safe and families together. Yet many people are not aware of what we do, let alone of how they might help. CCTV's Nonprofit Information Center comes at a crucial time for many local nonprofits who rely on community help."

Northwest Human Services (NWHs) has been providing medical and social services to the area's under-served populations since 1970. NWHs used their video brochure

to highlight the West Salem Medical and Mental Health Clinic, the dental clinic, crisis hotline, youth services, and services for the hearing impaired. Sebastian de Assis, director of community relations and development, says, "We appreciate how CCTV's short video brochure provides an engaging tour of NWHs agency's medical and social services."

HOME Youth & Resource Center works with high risk and homeless teens, a population that is typically under-funded, under-served, forgotten, or unnoticed. The organization's program director, Peggy Kahan, notes that "Now, with the click of a mouse anyone can literally see who we are, what we do, and learn how they can help. What an awesome—and easy—way to help social service agencies get the word out about our wonderful programs and the needs of our community."

CCTV can now better meet this vital media need thanks to vision, hard work, and cable television franchise resources. Because of this tremendously successful partnership, CCTV is able to help the less fortunate members of our community during this critical time of economic crisis.

You can read more about CCTV's work and see CCTV's new home—including a time-lapse view of the building's construction—at www.cctvsalem.org. ■CMR

"CCTV's Nonprofit Information Center comes at a crucial time for many local nonprofits who rely on community help."

SUE MILLER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
FAMILY BUILDING
BLOCKS

CAN TV Reaches Out to Chicago's Latino Community

■ BY BARBARA POPOVIC

Chicago Access Network Television (CAN TV) has been serving Chicago residents since its incorporation 25 years ago. During the first 15 years of its operation, a steady stream of people took advantage of CAN TV's services. While thousands of residents and groups were getting involved, many segments of the community had yet to participate. In 2001, the CAN TV board of directors set an organization wide goal of increasing demographic, geographic, and issue-based diversity of programming on CAN TV.

Latinos represent about 26 percent of Chicago's population but as of 2001, they had yet to begin using CAN TV in significant numbers. So CAN TV refocused its outreach efforts to increase awareness and involvement by Latino residents and groups. A studio program called *Perspectivas Latinas* was launched with a focus on the

work of Latino nonprofits. CAN TV increased its coverage of community

based events in Latino neighborhoods, as well as covering major events like the Puerto Rican Parade and immigration marches in Chicago.

The testimonials CAN TV receives from Latino groups attest to the progress that has been made toward increasing the diversity of programming on its channels.

**"Your organization has become a beacon of information for all."
—Refugio Gonzales**

CHICAGO'S LATINO COMMUNITY TESTIFIES ABOUT THE VALUE OF PEG CHANNELS



CAN TV staff train members of arts organizations from the Latino neighborhood of Pilsen.

CAN TV is a pivotal partner in providing opportunities for Latinos and others to share creative expression and issues. As many of our educational institutions face budget cuts that threaten programs, your organization has become a beacon of information for all.

Refugio Gonzales, Chicago Commission on Human Relations, Advisory Council on Latino Affairs

In the Latino community, more accessible television shows, such as *Perspectivas Latinas* are needed to educate families. We were able to use this to inform people about home buying, predatory lending, and affordable housing opportunities. We appreciate the service provided by CAN TV—it holds great value for the Chicago community.

Kristen Komara, The Resurrection Project



The Old Town School of Folk Music and the People's Music School appear on CAN TV's *Perspectivas Latinas* program.

I wanted to thank you for the wonderful opportunity to promote our La Peña Latin Music Series. Our presence on your program has already yielded some positive results for us here at Old Town School.

*Nick Macri,
Old Town School of Folk Music*

Your support is helping build awareness about our schools, thus providing educational opportunities for students in two of Chicago's most underserved neighborhoods.

*Sara Giloth,
San Miguel Schools*

This year, The International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago (ILCC) will celebrate the 24th Chicago Latino Film Festival. We are grateful that, as in the past, CAN TV keeps playing a role in helping us share the news and getting people excited about the festival.

*Pepe Vargas,
International Latino
Cultural Center of Chicago*

It is very important for us to promote our mission in the community and we are very happy that CAN TV gave us that opportunity. Thank you very much for your support to our loan program for small business owners in the Chicagoland area.

*Maria Fernanda Almeida,
Accion Chicago*

As a nonprofit with little to no budget for marketing and communications, you provided us with the ability to truly "Reach more People. Change more lives." Domestic violence is often a silent crime. Victims are embarrassed or ashamed to reach out for help and access information and services. Immigrant victims are also often scared to reach out to authorities for fear of deportation or they may not know that services are offered in their native language. By appearing on your television program, we were able to reach people in the privacy of their own homes and educate them on their rights and what services are available to them. *Perspectivas Latinas* allowed us to do this in the victims' own language even furthering the message.

*Amy C. Fox,
Life Span*

CAN TV Reaches Out (*continued*)



Chicago City Clerk Miguel Del Valle appears on City Club of Chicago Presents: Inside Chicago.

Thank you for allowing us to be on CAN TV regarding The *Luchando Contra el Cancer* event. Your efforts will ensure that the event will raise awareness in the Latino community about the importance of early cancer detection, cancer screening, the importance of eating healthy and being physically active.

*Giselle Vasquez,
American Cancer Society*

Our collaboration with CAN TV has given us access to a valuable media tool that enables us to exponentially multiply our outreach efforts to the Hispanic community in Chicago. The majority of Centro San Bonifacio's advertising is by word of mouth. CAN TV compliments our one-on-one recruitment efforts by providing us with an avenue to reach thousands of people at once.

In addition to CAN TV's contributions to our mission for collective empowerment, our staff and volunteer health promoters have benefited on a personal level. Often shy and reserved, hesitant to talk to a group of people, CAN TV's training and live shows have given these individuals an arena to gain confidence in themselves, in what they know, and in what they can give to their community. This, in turn, allows them to be more effective and confident teachers, public speakers, and advocates.

*Irma Pacheco,
Centro San Bonifacio*

Being able to discuss the stigma about foster care and educate your viewers about the need for foster parents is vital for the child welfare system. It is through these foster parents that we are able to provide safe homes for child victims of abuse and neglect.

*Elizabeth Arroyo,
Latino Consortium*

I want to thank you on behalf of the staff as well as the students for coming in and taping *Living in the Hood*, our play about life in Pilsen. The fact that you were able to adjust to our unique needs was something that I think only you could have done and was crucial to the success of the final product.

*Leo Ruiz,
National Museum of Mexican Art*

On behalf of the Hispanocare we would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our programs on health prevention...The results in the past year and a half have been wonderful. Individuals who have watched the show have called in for more information, have registered for free classes, have attended free Community Health Fairs and educational programs, and have taken advantage of free screenings.

*Lucy Robles-Aquino,
Hispanocare, Inc*

Your medium and its accessibility to entities such as ours strengthen community networks and foster the free exchange of information.

Noe Torres, Latino Social Workers Organization



CAN TV covers immigration rally in Chicago.

Barbara Popovic is executive director of CAN-TV in Chicago.

Health Tube

BronxNet Programs Focus on Health

■ BY AUDREY DUNCAN

According to a 2005 New York City Department of Health (DOH) study, the Bronx had the highest rate of hospitalization for childhood asthma of all five boroughs of New York City, while a 2004 DOH survey showed that over 200,000 Bronx residents suffer from obesity. With help, Bronxites may have the means to control these and other negative health conditions through BronxNet programming.

Glenis Henriquez, host of BronxNet's *Teens Talk 2 Glenis* and *Dialogo con Glenis*, firmly believes that her programs are helping. "I'm using my call-in talk programs to get viewers to change their habits, to become healthier," Henriquez says. "I'm especially interested in encouraging better food choices, smaller meals, and a healthier, more active lifestyle in the Latino community as we work to overcome obesity."

Teens Talk 2 Glenis is a weekly program dealing with the everyday problems encountered by teenagers. *Dialogo con Glenis* is a weekly Spanish-language program that focuses on a host of social, political, and human-interest issues, particularly those of special concern to the Latino community. Through support and input from health experts at Aetna, the programs are bringing Bronx television viewers in-depth information about preventing and controlling a host of health problems. Both programs are featuring detailed monthly discussions on health topics. Topics that have been covered by Henriquez's programs so far include:

- Speaking up to your Doctor
- Holiday Depression
- Heart Health
- Breast Cancer, and
- Managing Allergies.

"Aetna is pleased to sponsor these two quality TV programs. Working together with the great staff at BronxNet, we will help make the Bronx a healthier place to live and work," said Miguel Centeno of Aetna.

BronxNet Executive Director Michael Max Knobbe added, "BronxNet is proud to partner with Aetna to provide these quality health programs to our community. Teenagers and Spanish-speaking individuals represent a significant part of our audience and we thank Aetna for helping us share vital information with our viewers."

The need to take a more active role in our own well-being is becoming more widely recognized nationwide. Bronxites' desire to live well through healthier eating and exercise is reflected in decisions by fast-food chains to place salads and other healthy items on their menus and a high number of gym memberships.



BronxNet captures music, flavor, and health information shared at the Viva Bronx Event at Hostos Community College.

BronxNet Programs Focus on Health (*continued*)**About BRONXNET**

BronxNet, the Bronx public access television station and media center, began cablecasting in 1993. Our mission was shaped under the Cable Television Franchise Agreement between the City of New York and Cablevision of New York City. BronxNet programs are available on Channels 67, 68, 69, and 70. Each channel presents a unique brand of programming.

PRODUCTION TRAINING & ACCESS

BronxNet provides television production training for individuals and organizations that want to utilize the station's equipment and facilities to produce programs to air on a BronxNet channel. Once training is completed, individuals have access to BronxNet's equipment, production facilities and channels, as Certified Access Producers.

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

BronxNet produces a number of signature programs covering public affairs, self-development, sports, arts, and culture. The station's signature programs have received dozens of awards, including Emmy Awards and numerous Communicator Awards. BronxNet's signature programs serve as the training ground for The BronxNet Training Program for Future Media Professionals. Many former interns have utilized skills acquired at BronxNet to gain positions in production and programming at network and cable stations such as CBS, NBC, ABC, ESPN, and CNN.

**"I'm using
my call-in talk
programs to
get viewers
to change
their habits,
to become
healthier."**

***Dialogo
con Glenis*
host Glenis
Henriquez**

BronxNet has always been an active partner in healthful living efforts. The station facilitates the production of programs such as *Health Beat*, a live call-in program produced and hosted by Bronx Lebanon Hospital. BronxNet worked actively with Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. to produce public service announcements for his Fit Now initiative. "We have always been dedicated to contributing to our residents' awareness of various issues," said Knobbe. "Producing health programming is another way BronxNet fulfills its commitment to contributing to community development through media."

BronxNet is all about empowering the people of the Bronx through television. We hope that the health discussions on programs such as *Health Beat*, *Teens Talk*, and *Dialogo con Glenis* will empower viewers with enough knowledge to take an active role in creating more healthful lifestyles. ■CMR



Audrey Duncan is the director of development for BronxNet.

Energy Conservation and Assistance on St. Paul Neighborhood Network

■ BY MIKE WASSENAAR

Staying warm is more than mildly important in a Minnesota winter. Severe cold here can actually mean life or death for some people. Community Action Partnership of Ramsey County is one of the local nonprofit agencies that administers and promotes heating assistance for low-income people in Minnesota. They wanted to help policymakers and funders understand the need for sustaining these programs. They also wanted to tell that story with more than just statistics, so they came to Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN), the community media center in Saint Paul.

Community Action Partnership staff arrived at the center with the idea of making a TV program about how heating assistance protects lives—along with a DVD that would be distributed to policymakers and foundations in the state to ensure continued funding for the program. SPNN's staff producer David Zierott outlined the project for media production. The finished program featured Ramsey County residents who had received home heating assistance telling of the difference it made in their lives.

The resulting video, *Helping with Heat*, was so successful that Community Action Partnership asked SPNN for help with producing a second program to educate low-income Minnesotans about how to stretch their dollars with energy conservation. That video, *It's Worth It*, is now used to educate people of all incomes about home energy conservation throughout Minnesota.

"The *Helping with Heat* DVD televised in the St. Paul area helped us reach a wider audience of eligible participants for the program, said Kirk Hayes, interim executive director of the Community Action Partnership (www.capr.org). "This DVD has been well received by our community partners and participants during our outreach efforts. We have also received very positive feedback from energy conservation professionals on the *It's Worth It* DVD."

"Our partnership with SPNN has enabled us to do more with our outreach dollars than could have been accomplished otherwise," Hayes added. "We hope that SPNN's resources continue to be made available in the future for both our agency and for other nonprofit organizations."

In addition to being broadcast on Saint Paul cable, the *Helping with Heat* program is presented on DVD in



community settings to heating assistance clients. It also has been distributed to libraries throughout the state.

Community television is about community education, but it's also about building community worth—and using the power of media to leverage the success of other community institutions. It's a model of success that can be replicated in every community across the United States. ■CMR

Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, founded in 1985 as Cable Access St. Paul, now operates five channels on the St. Paul Comcast cable system reaching 52,000 cable homes. SPNN is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 charity, supported by a major operating grant from Comcast. SPNN's mission is to make media available, reflective, and responsive to the needs of people in Saint Paul in order to increase understanding and respect for the diversity of people and ideas in our democratic society. SPNN is dedicated to giving members of the public, organizations, and individuals access to television and video in order to better the civic fabric of our community.



Mike Wassenaar (wassenaar@spnn.org) is the executive director of St. Paul Neighborhood Network. Mike serves on the Alliance for Community Media Board, which he previously chaired for two years.

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Living Healthy in America Wins a HEMMY

■ BY VICKI EVANS

A unique partnership between La Frontera, Inc., the Tucson Burundi refugee community, and Access Tucson has produced an award-winning television series, *Living Healthy in America*. La Frontera is a nonprofit, community-based behavioral health agency that has been helping southern Arizona's children, adults, and families since 1968. Thousands of refugees from Burundi have settled in the United States in recent years, many of them coming from refugee camps in Tanzania and Rwanda.

The Arizona Public Health Association (AzPHA) presented the series with the HEMMY (Health Education) Award for best video during the 80th Annual AzPHA Meeting and Conference. The awards ceremony was held at the Arizona State Historical Society on September 17, 2008.

Using Access Tucson's long-running series, *Tucson-Vision*, as a model, La Frontera received a grant from Catholic Healthcare West in Phoenix to create African-language television shows. These television programs teach ways to increase childhood health and welfare and decrease youth injuries among many of Tucson's African refugee populations.

Jeannine K. Chapelle, La Frontera Center's prevention supervisor, directed a partnership that included health and safety experts from the University of Arizona, Tucson Fire and Police Departments, City of Tucson Emergency Call Center, International Rescue Committee, and P2 Preparedness.

Edward Hakizamana, president of BSPDA (Burundian Support Promote Development Association), served as the refugee community liaison. He then hosted each episode of *Living Healthy in America* in two languages, Kirundi and English. He also will translate the six-part series into Swahili.

Lisa Horner, Access Tucson's training manager, and Vicki Evans, the station's outreach manager, were project coordinators and videographers. Instructor and Production Specialist Larry Foster

also worked behind the camera and edited the project, while Senior Production Assistant Rob Shoults directed the studio productions. Volunteers Byron Bissell, Sandra Socobi, Pat Quinn, David Cheng, Alan Barley, and John Byerley completed the "A-1" studio crew.

The six-part *Living Healthy in America* series was cablecast in October and November of 2008 on Access Tucson channel 74 on Comcast and channel 99 on Cox.

The series will also be disseminated throughout Arizona to refugee resettlement agencies and healthcare providers so that they can better assist African refugees who speak Swahili and Kirundi. Though there are sometimes misconceptions about refugees, they are legal immigrants to the United States who have escaped political chaos or war in their own countries. ■CMR

Vicki Evans is the outreach manager for Access Tucson.



Living Healthy in America: Tucson Burundi community members, Daniel and Precise, demonstrate first aid techniques for the Access Tucson cameras.

Austin Reed Takes Four Corners Bureau Chief Job at Albuquerque NBC Affiliate

■ BY MONICA WEITZEL

Where's Austin Reed? He's working as the Four Corners Bureau Chief at KOB-TV NBC 4 News in New Mexico at the moment. You can follow Reed's career online at www.austinreed.com.

Austin Reed, a longtime producer at MetroEast, was recently named Four Corners Bureau Chief at KOB-TV, the NBC affiliate in Albuquerque. (As you'll see from the interview below, he thought he would be landing in New York, but it turned out to be New Mexico.) Reed took the time to answer a few questions for staff member, Monica Weitzel, before he left Gresham to pursue his future endeavors.

Monica Weitzel: Austin, how old were you when you started here at MetroEast?

Austin Reed: I was 13 years old. I'm now 20.

MW: How did you get interested in Community Media and what did you do when you first started?

AR: When I was 9 years old, I had a fake news studio in my basement. Channel 2 News heard about it and did a story about me. As a result, I was asked to be a Junior Reporter for Channel 2. That resulted in junior reporting for Channels 6 and 12 as well.

One day my dad was watching public access and suggested I try that out. I was hesitant at first. My mom, dad, and I took classes together at MCTV and I started producing *Rose City News*. I fell in love with it. I probably have produced seven series over the past seven years.

MW: What have been some of the highlights for you at MetroEast?

AR: The experience has been better than anything I could have gotten in college. Also, the connections I've made [have been highlights], as well as the wonderful friendships.

MW: We have quite a few young people taking workshops right now at MetroEast. Do you

have any advice for those just starting out?

AR: Learn as much as you can and do everything. With today's technology it is not enough to specialize in one area. You need to learn about everything behind the camera as well as in front of the camera. Also, get others involved in your projects. It is a great way to meet new people and make new friends.

MW: I understand you are moving soon to New York. What do you hope your future holds for you?

AR: I'm going to New York to freelance in TV news and entertainment, radio, and commercial work. I hope to do this for up to a year. After that my agent will work on getting projects for me.

MW: You are going to be missed by all of us here at MetroEast. Anything else you'd like to add?

AR: I'd like to say THANK YOU! If not for the staff and volunteers at MetroEast, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to DJ for Movin' 107.5 or to be a general assignment reporter for Fox 12 News. I will really miss everybody. Please tell them all that. I'm sure I'll be back to visit from time to time. ■CMR

About Metro East

MetroEast Community Media is a nonprofit media center located in Gresham, Oregon. In 2009 we will celebrate our 25th year helping people participate in our community's civic and cultural life. We provide training, tools, and transmission for volunteers who create programming for and about our community. MetroEast serves Portland's East County, which includes the cities of Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, and Wood Village.



Learn as much as you can and do everything. With today's technology it is not enough to specialize in one area. You need to learn about everything behind the camera as well as in front of the camera.

Left: Austin Reed behind the camera.

Seattle's SCAN Community Media Provides Young Filmmakers the Road Beyond YouTube

■ BY MARSHALL PARKER

Attending summer video camp provides new horizons for a visually impaired middle-schooler.

Summer video camp is almost always exciting for the kids who attend it. For many, it is a revelation, the opening of a new door. For some, though, it can be frustrating. This is the story of Jonathan Taylor-Kantz and his experience and growth at a Seattle video summer camp in 2008.

First some background: SCAN Community Media, the nonprofit organization that runs Seattle and King County's Media Access Center and channel, began new partnerships in 2008. One series of partners was formed specifically for the purpose of developing co-branded youth camps for the summer. One of those partners was Pacific Science Center, an interactive museum that is a staple in the landmark Seattle Center, from which the Space Needle reaches into the sky.

The co-branded camp during the summer of 2008 had the theme of Global Warming. The fifteen middle school-aged kids who signed up for it were ripe for the opportunity to create television and have their friends all see it on their own TVs.

Jonathan was teamed with two girls. This might have posed a problem for some boys his age, but Jonathan found it agreeable enough. The process of learning about the effects of global climate change and possible solutions to it that everyone can work toward was well received by most of the young people at the camp.

Planning the script and shooting video at the park and in the studio were fairly fun for Jonathan, but posed challenges for him, too. Undaunted by being legally blind, Jonathan found that he could work with most of the

equipment if he got really, really close to it and concentrated.

The difficulty reached a peak for his crew members, though, when it came to editing. When Jonathan moved close enough to the laptop screen to be able to see it, he blocked his teammates' view. Though Jonathan's needs were being met, his two teammates found that they could not work as co-editors with him. And Jonathan was strong willed enough to want to see his project through to the end.

The girls were not able to finish camp, yet Jonathan relished being the lone filmmaker left on the project. Emboldened, he put his own unique stamp into every frame.

He worked with the Pacific Science Center instructor, Steve Yasukawa, to create his own soundtrack using Apple's GarageBand program. He enjoyed this part of the process a great deal.

Volunteer Ruth Gregory, who teaches film study at nearby Shoreline Community College, gave Jonathan support as he worked through the editing process. "I really admired his confidence and resolve," said Gregory. "He was really a 'mini-auteur' and very clear minded in his vision."

Taaj Middleton put the camp together and taught sections of the video production classes. As SCAN's youth programs manager, she was concerned when she realized that one of her campers had special needs.

"I started off a bit concerned that [Jonathan] would not get as much out of the camp as other kids. And continued to be concerned when I noticed his frustration while developing his own way of working with the equipment," said Middleton. "But my concern quickly turned to



Undaunted by being legally blind, Jonathan edits his project.

awe. He was not fazed one bit by his limitations. And when he was the only one left in his crew, he just blazed right on.”

When the projects were completed, the campers did a special TV show in SCAN’s studio with their parents. Participants answered questions about global warming in a game show called *Are You Smarter Than Your Camper?* The campers also got the chance to screen their films. Jonathan’s film was roundly hailed as one of the camp’s best productions.

And what did Jonathan think about his camp experience?

“SCAN Camp was awesome,” he said. “That’s all I have to say. We learned a whole bunch of stuff. We learned a whole bunch of

global warning stuff. My PSA, *The Nightmare*, was about a kid having a nightmare about pollutants, global warming, and climate change. Everything that has to do with all of those things. Don’t have your kids have to fix it. You should fix it yourselves so your kids won’t have nightmares about it.”

“It would be cool to have a show on SCAN,” he added. A lot of stuff in the political world and a whole lot of other stuff I don’t agree with and I would like my right to say so.”

Jonathan is planning on coming back to SCAN to create more projects. He, his campmates, and those from all of the other camps this year have the opportunity to continue work at SCAN on projects.

“He was not fazed one bit by his limitations. And when he was the only one left in his crew, he just blazed right on.”

TAAJ
MIDDLETON



Marshall Parker served two years as executive director at SCAN in Seattle. Previous to that he worked at Houston Media Source for eleven years. Mr. Parker also serves on the NW Regional Board of the ACM.

Another filmmaker from Jonathan's camp, Joseph, is interning for SCAN. He has been sent out on various assignments, including the opening of the new Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club, where SCAN operates their video and sound recording studio.

There are a number of places where kids can learn filmmaking. YouTube and other services offer distribution opportunities on the Internet. Yet there is a special cachet about seeing your work on television. Knowing that you are sharing the same distribution system as every other production somehow makes your work feel more legitimate.

Television also increases the chances of your work being seen. SCAN distributes into over 500,000 homes in King County and Southern Snohomish County on Comcast 77

and Broadstripe 23. The channel also streams live online at www.scantv.org. That easy access is very powerful. For your video to be found on YouTube, you have to send people your link or be lucky enough to be the one out of the 10,000 uploads per hour that catches someone's attention.

Access is a term that is often used in the disabilities world. It is wonderful when that term also means access to media, to a television channel where you can show your creativity, just like Jonathan and the other campers in Seattle were able to do. This same amazing process happens every day at all of the access centers around the country that offer youth programs.

Jonathan's video can be seen on SCAN's website: www.scantv.org. ■CMR



Jonathan works with one of the two middle school girls on his team.



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